

Smith, Harry Lester
Convocation Address

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1945
June

THE METHODIST CHURCH
OHIO AREA
H. LESTER SMITH, RESIDENT BISHOP
414 OUTLOOK BUILDING
44 EAST BROAD STREET
COLUMBUS 15, OHIO

June 6, 1945

Mr. Harold K. Schellenger, director
Bureau Public Relations
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

My dear Friend:

I am enclosing an advance copy of
my commencement address for Friday morning,
June 8, according to your recent request.

Cordially yours,

HLS:jgm

H. Lester Smith

BROADENING HORIZONS

In a walking tour in the Himalayas in the Thibetan states of Sikkin and Nepal a few years ago I had an experience in broadening horizons that I shall never forget.

Beginning at the foot of the range, our trail passed through the sub-tropical growth of the tree ferns, palms, bamboos and tropical plants to an elevation of some 4000 feet. From here to eleven thousand feet, the growth was of the temperate zone, magnolia, oak, chestnut, and giant rhododendron trees eighty feet in height and nearly four feet in diameter, The rhododendrons were in full bloom. As far as the eye could see, a ribbon of color, blue and pink and lavender stretched out along the mighty mountains. Almost every tree just above and below the 6,000 foot level was filled with orchids of which there are over 600 varieties recorded in this single little state. Above this temperate zone our trail winds through alpine or mountain vegetation. Great forests of the deodar or Indian cedar and mighty pine trees cover the mountains. Gradually forest growth disappears as we approach the all year snow line of 16,000 feet, and our trail winds along the bare windswept ridges like a white ribbon seeking the passes into Thibet far above us in the snow.

At the close of one long day's tramp, when the going had been hard and slow, we came to our primitive rest house at Sandakphu at an altitude of 12,000 feet. The whole day we had been traveling in the clouds. We couldn't even see enough to be scared by the dangerous sections of the trail. While our guides were making camp and preparing the evening meal, one of my companions and I decided to climb the mountain back of the camp and seek to get above the clouds. We reached the peak nearly 1,000 feet above the camp, and for the last 100 feet were above the clouds. The sun was low in the west - everything below us was covered by a silver floor of clouds. Around us to the west, north and east was a great semi-circle of snow-covered mountains, over 300 miles from east to west. Everest, which was part of the range on which we stood, was in the center. Kinchinjanga was far away toward Assam on the East. The entire massive line of mountains, the most astounding in the world, was a blaze of golden glory in the setting sun. More than 1,100 peaks over 2,000 feet high were in that mountain range. You truly felt, as Kipling once described a similar experience, as though you were "sitting in a swallow's nest under the eaves of the roof of the world." Nowhere else have I ever seen any sight to compare with this, and it will always be to me the symbol of the crowning experiences of expanding horizons

in those exalted moments of personal life when, as the writer in Holy writ has said, "We are caught up into celestial heights and experiences, and hardly know whether we are in the body or out of the body."

(II Corinthians 12-1-4.) Men do attain to sublime and incomparably broad and beautiful ideals of life where the great glory and value of humanity have far-reaching horizons of possible achievement, but the road to such heights is long and hard.

One starts out with horizons of unbelievable limitations. Many never escape from the prison house of ignorance, and the limitations of an introversion of interest and experience that is almost complete.

I talked one entire morning with Helen Keller, through Mrs. Macy, her teacher years ago. I was seeking to understand the experience of one who was completely shut in by blindness and deafness from infancy, but was rescued from that tragic and terrible condition by the incredible patience and skill of a great teacher, and the tireless industry of her own great soul which was determined to be free from the intolerable prison of her own physical limitations. What a wonderful person she has become, and what an almost unbelievable experience of lifting and enlarging horizons she has had as she passed from almost complete introversion to a mar-

velous measure of self realization! Even without sight or hearing, she lifted the horizons of enforced darkness and ignorance to the glory of a broad culture, a highly-trained and well-furnished mind, and all the gracious strength of a noble Christian personality. It was indeed a magnificent triumph when she graduated from Radcliffe College with high honors, and became an author, lecturer, and essayist of distinction. In a measure, her experience is one through which we must all pass. Introversion is universal in infancy. Childhood at first is wholly self-centered. Child life is dominated by its own desires and appetites, and is not conscious of obligations or relations which it is required to honor.

But life is a stern and uncompromising teacher. Kipling in his "Jungle Tales" describes the experience of Mowgli, the wolf boy, who was the child of a woodcutter, and was taken by Akela, the leader of the wolf pack, to his den when he found the baby alone in the jungle. There he grew to the early years of youth with no teachers but the beasts of the forest. Wise old Akela, his foster father, taught him jungle craft. Old Baloo the Bear, was his teacher of the jungle law. Hathi, the century-old elephant, introduced him to the other denizens of the forest, while Kaa the great rock python, opened the doors into the hearts of the snake people. His learning was not a painless experience. Arms and limbs and body bore

many scars, and each separate scar marked an advance in both knowledge and understanding and sometimes in wisdom. He learned that one cannot live unto himself, even in a jungle. He discovered that one's own safety and happiness was better protected by courtesy, good manners, kindness and a generous consideration of the rights and wishes and happiness of others, than by a selfish aggressiveness or by a clever outwitting of an unsuspecting associate. Many hard experiences of pain and suffering and hunger taught him the value of a kindly heart ready to share and quick to respond to another's need. Indeed it would be difficult to find in a book written for adults, a more telling pattern of social obligations and a more workable, if rather crude philosophy of social relationships than Kipling has given us in this book for children. When old Baloo, the teacher of the law taught Mowgli the master word which opened doors and made friends for Mowgli throughout the jungle, that word had a familiar sound to even our human ears: The master word of bird people, snake people, and all animals that hunt on four feet, is this: "We be of one blood, thou and I."

The interesting comparison of jungle life with human society is that there in the jungle, they believed this master word and acted upon it. It commanded their helpful response, far beyond the response which a similar

master word receives in human society. In this simple way the introversion of a life in a life untaught by human teachers is changed from an unhealthy, introverted self-centered existence, to a wholesome, normal life with the intelligent recognition of social relationships and obligations, and is replaced by a readiness to fulfill these obligations at any cost.

In these first lessons, life's fundamental experiences become our teachers. Our education, however, must bring to us far wider horizons if we are to see the larger reaches of life. I am personally greatly concerned for the maintenance of the cultural values of a liberal arts education. I recognize the values of vocational training. I know the need of skills and tools for the increasingly complex life of our day. I am deeply conscious, however, of the need of a larger, stronger, wiser person to use the tools. We are in too great a hurry to get at the task of specific preparations. In our day of tragic superficiality, and inadequate preparation, we need the broadening horizons of history, literature, drama, art, poetry, music, the social sciences, and the natural sciences, to develop men of broader vision, understanding and purpose. With such broad culture as our preparation, we have the possibility of the development of a generation of scholars and creative leaders in the fields of their later specialization that

no other course could possibly produce. We have too many men and women who know nothing but their own subject. Neither in college, university, nor in the reading and studies of their later lives, did they ever enjoy the broad horizons of a rich and gracious universal culture. We have too few men who are citizens of the world, the intimates of the ages, the initiates into the mysteries of many noble cultures.

I covet for America men and women who are scholars of this type, not only as the educational leaders of tomorrow, but as the leaven of wisdom which will leaven the lump of our social, political, and practical worlds of action. In all fields we need to know more that we may do better that which we are set to do. But all of this is not enough. Some of history's greatest masters of learning in music, art, literature or science, have been tragically unhappy persons, so unhappy in fact, that many have taken their own lives. Introvert, self-centered, at war within themselves, divided, discordant, unhappy even to insanity, they could not find the road to the integration of their personal lives. Education, knowledge, scientific training, is not sufficient to wholly cure man's introversion. Indeed the gap between the development of the integrating influence and the directive controls of man's moral and spiritual nature, and the growth

of his scientific knowledge and his mechanical skills of all sorts has grown so great that it endangers not only our happiness but our very existence.

In the second volume of Sandberg's "Lincoln", (Volume 2, Page 5), is an account of a letter written by Henry Adams at the American legation in London to his brother in America. "I tell you these are great times. Man has mounted science, and has been run away with." "I firmly believe that before many centuries, science will be the master of man. The engines which he will have invented will be beyond his strength to control. Someday science may have the existence of man in its power, and the human race will commit suicide by blowing up the world." Then following the same thought in the moving picture, "Edison the Man", Mr. Edison is made to say: "Science is getting out of control. It is running wild. We need something that will bring man's humanity into harmony with his intelligence, something that will bring his conscience into control of his powers and skills. Then followed the story of the first electric light plant used for lighting the streets of New York City. They used two dynamos because the largest in existence did not have sufficient power. The two engines which ran these were not synchronized. The dynamos fought each other, and threatened to destroy the entire installation. Mr. Edison then constructed a governor which per-

fectly co-ordinated and harmonized the two engines, so that they worked together perfectly. Then, interpreting his first point about man's inability to bring his own skills under moral control, he said in his closing address, "I believe that the Creator, who has enabled us to achieve our present success, can and will help us to unify the powers of life and personality so that they will work together for man's good and not for his destruction."

All of which brings us to what many of our great psychologists of today believe to be necessary to complete man's perfect deliverance from an unwholesome introversion. Man must find in God, by the use of whatever religion he believes and obeys - that deliverance from himself which will enable him to find his larger self in union with the divine. As one great psychologist puts it in the words of Jesus: "He that would save his life shall lose it, and he that would lose his life, the same shall find it."

The good God teaches us that all wholesome, healthy, complete realization of our greatest and best selves is realized when we turn away from an introverted, self-centered, selfish, self-seeking and find by God's guidance a noble purpose to make our life serve God and man and the future needs of the world. Young men and women normally feel the pressure of such lofty purpose

and noble desire. They dream dreams. They see visions. If they are worth their salt, they yearn to serve. Of course we may have mixed ideals. It is hard to keep ourselves out of the picture. But the engineer wants to build roads for the comfort of coming generations. He wants to build bridges to make life easier and safer. The physician, true to his oath as a disciple of Aesculapius puts his skill at the service of suffering humanity. Neither personal safety, nor profit nor fame nor comfort are allowed to challenge his loyalty to his oath to serve. The scientist dreams his dream. He seeks to unlock the mysteries of natural processes in order that he may enrich and bless the generations as yet unborn. Many a scientist has died poor because he refused to withhold his discoveries from the world or to exploit them at such a cost as would deny them to the poor.

Of course I am not naive enough to believe that there are no exceptions to this practice - but I am eager to help you to see it as the kind of life God intends us to live, and the kind of a life that will make us sane and wholesome, useful and happy.

The Jordan river flows south out of the mountains of Lebanon. It is cool and sweet and life-giving. It flows into the Sea of Galilee. It brings life and supports life. It rushes on down the valley, until it comes to the Dead Sea. There is the tragedy

into which it disappears. It is lost in the Sea of Death. Why is the Dead Sea dead? Why is there no living thing in it? Because it always takes and never gives. It is an introvert. There is no outlet. It serves neither man nor beast nor life itself. It swallows up all it receives and holds fast to it all. When the sun evaporates that which the Dead Sea cannot hold, it leaves behind it bitterness and death. What a strange metamorphosis! Water, a life-giving, life sustaining substance, is turned into an instrument of death entirely and only because it does not continue to lose itself in its task. Saving becomes losing.

All of which becomes a parable with a pointed and inescapable lesson. Any stream of life, no matter how fine or useful or brilliant, is changed into a dark pool of death when it refuses to lose its life that it might find itself in its self-giving in service. This is a law of life, and we live in obedience to it or we lose all in the death of our powers and happiness by disregarding it.

If we now apply this principle to our social problems, national and international, we find that even the most searching scrutiny cannot find any escape from its inevitable operation. National and international

introversion is as deadly as it is in the life of individuals. President Hutchins recently said: - "Our main weakness is moral unreadiness and lack of personal disciplines to sacrifice and serve. The nation is selfish; labor, capital and individuals are seeking their own. We need moral and spiritual preparedness far beyond anything else."

The center of the world for the introvert individual is himself and his interests. The center of the world for the introvert nation is itself - its own national desires, interests and prosperity. No such a philosophy can succeed in the Conference at San Francisco or anywhere else in promoting the creation of a genuine unified co-operative world organization. There is no political arithmetic by which a group of introvert nations can add up to a happy and harmonious international family in which justice can be assured and the common welfare can be secured. You cannot pool ignorance and get wisdom. You cannot pool selfishness, self-interest, hate, jealousy, greed and fear and get the Kingdom of God on earth.

It is true that our men and women are serving sacrificially in every corner of the world. It is true that American blood has made holy ground in many lands. It is true that American money and

goods and food have been poured out like water to help the world in its need. It is true that American ideals and devotion have been joined with other freedom-loving peoples to defend the liberties of mankind. But who can fail to see the denial of the authority of the divine ideal of a world of peace and brotherhood where love and justice prevail? And we dare not be Pharisaical about it, and blame others more than ourselves. In all nations, our own included, class conflict, race prejudices, ideological disputes, national pride and greed and arrogance still stand in the way of understanding and friendly agreement and co-operation. And they will continue to do so until the clouds of greed and selfishness and hate are lifted, and in the broad horizons of the love of God, our common Father helps men to realize the oneness of human brotherhood, and directs his actions so that he patterns the worlds life upon this divine ideal.

For the whole world, the master word is:

"We be of one blood, You and I."